

ZIONISM & ANTI-ZIONISM: The history of two opposing ideas

EPISODE 2: LABOR COMMUNISM, SOCIALISM, BUNDISM & LABOR ZIONISM

We continue with a comparison of two important Jewish movements in the first half of the 20th century: Labor Zionism and Bundism. Inspired by the rise of socialism and the ideal of self-determination, Labor Zionists worked to revitalize Jewish nationalism by immigrating to Palestine and working the land. At the same time, other Jews argued for remaining in Europe and working to create a utopia that would make distinct national identities obsolete. Although only Zionism has stood the test of time, these other contemporary movements help us understand the Jewish debate which was unfolding, dealing with the question of how to be Jew in the modern era.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What were the conditions of Eastern European Jewry to which both Labor Zionists and Bundists were responding? | **Timecode: 4:11 - 6:10**
2. What did Labor Zionism and Bundism have in common, and how did they disagree? | **Timecode: 8:16 - 10:34; 15:16 - 16:54**
3. Why did Communism appeal to the Jews? | **Timecode: 11:07 - 13:25**
4. What were the particular claims of Labor Zionism? What were its universal claims? | **Timecode: 17:40 - 25:08**
5. How can Zionism be understood as a “decolonial” liberation movement? | **Timecode: 25:18 - 30:10**
6. Why do Bundism and Jewish Socialism appeal to some Jews today? | **Timecode: 34:17 - 37:30**

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

1. How does the pairing of Labor Zionism with Communism and Bundism relate to the pairing of Political Zionism and Enlightenment emancipation from Week 1? Which themes repeat themselves, and which new arguments emerge?
2. Was Labor Zionism right to reject Jewish history in search of a “New Jew?” What are the arguments for and against understanding Zionism as a replacement of the Judaism that came before it?
3. Can you sympathize with Bundists and Jewish Communists, despite what Dr. Wilf calls the “verdicts of history” against them? Should the movements be understood as raising eternal claims, or only studied in their respective historical and political contexts?
4. Dr. Wilf calls Israel’s socialist legacy one of the “best things” about the country. Do you agree or disagree?

PRIMARY SOURCES FOR CONVERSATION

1. [BILU Manifesto](#)
2. [“Di Shvue,” the anthem of the Jewish Bund](#)
3. [“Toil-A poem”](#) by Avraham Shlonsky:
4. *Bonus Contemporary Reading* [How a Founding Socialist Inspired Karl Marx, and Then Went on to Herald the State of Israel: Moses Hess](#) by Asael Abelman